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Socialism

Opponents of Socialism often ask us for a detailed blue-print or model of Socialism. There are currently too few Socialists with adequate information at hand to give in to such a request. Our main task is to get workers to understand capitalism and why it can never work in the interest of the working class.

We do not have sufficient knowledge of the conditions which will prevail either when a Socialist majority begins to take hold in the world or when Socialism has been established to seriously attempt to anticipate a future Socialist system free from the problems we face at the moment. Socialists are reasonable and practical people and not given in to utopian speculation. We are under no obligation to construct either “socialist models” or detailed plans of a socialist society.

We can only state the broad Socialist changes, in both social relationships and the way society produces and distributes goods and services that arise from a Socialist revolution by the conscious and political action of a socialist majority. The most obvious result of the establishment of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution is the abolition of the wages system and the buying and selling of a worker's labour power.

The framework of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all society is a prerequisite for meeting social need. With the means of production and distribution socially owned, no one would be in the position to exploit the workers' labour power or ability to work and turn it into a commodity and buy it. On the other hand, with direct access to production, no worker would need to find a buyer for their labour power.

The conditions of wage labour would be abolished because the producers would no longer be divorced from the means of production. Production would take place by voluntary labour producing useful things for meeting human need.

Another feature of Socialism will be the abolition of class distinctions and privileges. The capitalist class today live a life of luxury and privilege through living off their un-earned income of rent, interest and profit. The capitalists produce no wealth. Social wealth is produced by the working class no one else.

The reason why the capitalist class live a life of luxury is because they own the means of production and distribution which is protected by the capitalist State. Once the capitalists lose possession of the means of production they are no longer capitalists and would work in the same way as other members of a Socialist society: “*From each according to ability to each according to need*” Social distinctions within Socialism will not exist. Work will be voluntary and people will have direct access to obtain what they need to live worthwhile lives.

Politics of Taxation and the National Debt

History of the National Debt

Before the late 17th century it was usual for the State to fund its war debts by levying new taxes. But by 1694, the War of the Grand Alliance had caused a crisis in the English government's finances. The government was forced to borrow £1.2 million at a rate of 8 per cent from the newly formed Bank of England and national deficit financing for war was born. Adam Smith devoted an entire chapter in THE WEALTH OF NATIONS to the subject of the national debt and its relationship to paying for the cost of waging war noting that: “...*the reduction of the public debt in time of peace has never borne any proportion to its accumulation in time of war*” (Ch. 3, Of Public Debts, p. 404, Everyman, 1910).

National debt in the modern sense emerged in the early 18th century, as banking and financial markets enabled the creation of debt – what Marx called “*fictitious capital*” - through the issue of bills and bonds. Subsequently, the national debt rose from £12m in 1700 to £850m by the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. There was, nevertheless, a conflict within the ruling class about the use of the national debt and taxation to finance war. During the Crimean War (1853-56), for example, the landed aristocracy, represented by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Gladstone, tried to off-load the cost of the war onto the industrial capitalist class through the imposition of an income tax.

This led to a bitter reaction by the capitalists and their political representatives like the industrialist, Richard Cobden and the mill owner, John Bright, two leading free-traders but all to no avail. The capitalist class did not have a representative in the Cabinet until the end of the nineteenth century with the appointment of the Conservative M.P., W. H. Smith. Smith was to be satirised by Gilbert and Sullivan in their Operetta, *H. M. S. Pinafore* for being an admiral in the Queen's navy but who never went to sea. Capitalists had to wait until 1911, with the passing of the Parliament Act under the Liberals, before they had political supremacy over the aristocracy in the House of Lords. And they had to wait until the 21st century, under the Blair Labour government's House of Lords Act (1999), to break the voting power of the hereditary peers.

Not all capitalists have supported the use of debt and taxation to pay for it. John Bright, for example, was a member of the Peace Society (an organisation who held the absurd belief that free trade would end war) and denounced the Crimean War as un-Christian, contrary to the principles of international free trade, and harmful to British interests. The free-traders had already announced during the campaign for the Repeal of the Corn Laws that: “*Jesus Christ was free trade and free trade was Jesus Christ*”. In the class struggle with the landed aristocracy, the early capitalist class and their political representatives believed God was on their side. And evoking biblical scripture to describe the carnage of the Crimean War, Bright said that: “*the angel of death has been abroad throughout the land and you could almost hear the beating of his wings*” (Speech to the House of Commons). He blamed the aristocracy for deluding the working class, who, in the main, supported the war. He said that British foreign policy and the expensive network of diplomatic appointments constituted: “*a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy*”.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/bright.html>

One side issue about the Crimean War should be recalled. The industrialists wanted the working class to be taxed since large numbers of workers were supporting the war. The government considered lowering the tax level so that most workers would pay tax. The idea was dropped for two reasons. First, the high cost of collecting large numbers of small amounts of tax would have been greater than the total amount collected. The second reason was that, because unemployment was then very low, it was realised that the workers would be able to get higher wages and thus maintain their purchasing power in spite of tax deductions. The burden of taxation does not fall on the working class.

The First World War saw another increase in the national debt, from £650m in 1914 to £7.4bn in 1919. To finance

the Second World War meant that by 1946 the debt had grown to £24.7bn, or 250% of GDP. The debt then declined rapidly in GDP terms, but the period of high inflation in the 1970s and 80s ensured net debt continued to rise, from £33.1bn in 1970 to £197.4bn in 1988.

Historically, British capitalism has borrowed to finance wars. In the last 1000 years only Edward III has ever defaulted when, during, his feudal reign, he repudiated debts to his Italian creditors causing the collapse of two Florentine banks. This traditional willingness to pay creditors without defaulting has meant British capitalism, unlike other capitalist countries, enjoys high credit worthiness.

The acceleration in the national debt became increasingly pronounced with the rise of the so-called Welfare State set up as an insurance policy for the capitalist class after 1945. UK public sector net debt in 2011 was £875.8 billion or 58% of National GDP (source: Office National Statistics March 27th, 2011).

Up until 2004 the national debt as a percentage of GDP was measured by the National Loans Fund. This statistical tool was discontinued by the Treasury in 2004 as it no longer accurately reflected the true liabilities for the capitalist class of the modern capitalist state. Today the national debt has once more become a political issue for the capitalist class and its political agents. In 1997 Public Sector Net Debt stood at £352 billion and has doubled in twelve years. (<http://www.debtbombshell.com/history-of-national-debt.htm>).

Consequently, the high level of debt has meant media are now full of economics pundits giving their views on the economic dangers for British capitalism caused by the national debt. They lament at the vast sums which have to be paid out on the interest alone – the annual cost of the interest on the debt is around £43 bn, about 3% of GDP (loc cit). And that cost comes out of the taxation paid by the capitalist class, part of the surplus value (as Marx called it), exploited from the working class in the production process. Misleadingly these media pundits all give the impression that the national debt is a concern for everyone. It is not.

The national debt, taxation and war are of no interest to the working class.

The capitalist class are in constant conflict with each other, both nationally and internationally. The level of the national debt and who carries the burden of taxation are just two of many issues which fill up the economics journals demanding attention but they are issues to about which the working class has no interest. Debt and taxation are of interest to the capitalist class and their politicians but workers are constantly being dragged into these partisan disputes.

The DAILY MAIL (6th April 2011) claimed the current level of national debt would amount to £140,000 per household giving the misleading impression that capitalists and workers alike were liable for the national debt. And in article in the DAILY TELEGRAPH, the economist, Jeff Randall wrote passionately on the question of the National Debt as though it was of interest to everyone. He warned that at the end of the current financial year, Britain's borrowings would be £909 billion and by 2015-16 they were predicted to reach £1,359 billion, an increase of 50 per cent (*Not the Devil's Budget, but a Necessary Evil*, March 25th 2011). "*We*", that is capitalists and workers alike, were all supposed to be equally alarmed and agitated by the size of the national debt and vote Tory.

Mr Randall conveniently forgot that "*we*" live in a class divided society. British capitalism and its debt belong to the capitalist class. As Marx stated in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, the working class has no country: "*you cannot take from workers what they do not have*". The working class do not own the means of production or the commodities that are produced just as they do not own the raw resources, or the need for the protection of trade routes and the requirement for political representation to further spheres of strategic interest. The national debt is not the debt of the working class but the debt collectively held by the employing class through its State: "*the executive of the bourgeoisie*". The interest on the national debt falls onto the capitalist class not the working class. The question of taxation is again an issue for the capitalist class and it's political representatives, not the working class. When capitalism's spivs and gamblers buy and sell government debt and get their fingers burnt: "*the nation is not a penny poorer by the bursting of these soap bubbles of nominal money capital*" (Marx CAPITAL VOLUME III Penguin

1996 p. 599). Social wealth is made in production, not in the sphere of circulation or the gambling casinos of the City.

The working class has to live on wages and salaries. The workers struggle, under capitalism, to try and increase their wages and salaries, as and when they can, subject to the trade cycle and the balance of the contesting parties. In the economic down turn of the last two years the workers' real income has fallen by some 5% (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, 26th March 2011). In periods of good trade, workers will improve on their income and working conditions. Nevertheless the field on which the class struggle takes place is not one of the workers' choosing. The capitalist class ownership of the machinery of production and distribution is protected by the machinery of government. As a buyer of labour power the employer is always in a position of power: the power either to employ or not to employ workers. If the national debt, taxation and capitalism's wars are of no interest to workers, then to consciously and politically organise for the abolition of the wages system and the establishment of Socialism certainly is in the interest of the working class.

MARX AND THE NATIONAL DEBT

The system of public credit, i.e., of national debts... took possession of Europe generally during the period of manufacture... The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possession of the modern nation is – the national debt. Hence, quite consistently with this, the modern doctrine that a nation becomes the richer the more deeply it is in debt. Public credit becomes the credo of capital. And with the rise of national debt-making, lack of faith in the national debt takes the place of the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness... The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows unproductive money with the power of creation and thus turns it into capital, without forcing it to expose itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The state's creditors actually give nothing away, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would. But furthermore, and quite apart from the class of idle rentiers, the improvised wealth of the financiers who play the role of middlemen between the government and the nation and the tax-farmers, merchants and private manufacturers, for whom a good part of every national loan performs the service of a capital fallen from heaven, apart from all these people, the national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds, and to speculation: in a word it has given rise to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy (CAPITAL VOL. 1 Ch. 31 Penguin ed. P. 919, 1996).

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The Myth of the Welfare State

Political commentators in the British media are worried about the apparent rapid and steady economic growth of capitalist countries like India and China. They point to the low level of “welfare” payments, low taxation, and low wages in these countries, and despair at the reverse situation found in the United Kingdom. They want cuts in government spending, fewer red tape and less public sector workers so British capitalism can compete more effectively on the world market.

What capitalists and their politicians wish for and the reality of the situation are two entirely different things. Capitalism is anarchic, contradictory and unpredictable. Events never turn out as capitalists and their supporters wish for.

Ideally, for capitalists and their politicians, all workers would be in work, exploited and producing profit for their employers. There would be millions of thrifty workers saving up for when they were either unemployed or sick or in old age, and not depending on the State for hand-outs. There would be no drug addicts, no alcoholics, no single mothers living on sink housing estates. And the working class would conveniently die off before requiring any form of pension. After all the reason why the 1908 State pension was first set at 70, for those workers who earned less than £21 a year, was because life expectancy for those workers was around 50 years of age. Most workers died

before they received their pension. Yet, the reverse has happened; the cost of government has soared.

The cost of the State has increased because governments have taken on additional functions, in particular what are known as “*social services*” and workers are living longer. Collectively the capitalist class needs a fit, healthy and well educated workforce but this does not extend to those they can no longer exploit like the elderly and infirm. And the cost of health provision, pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits does not come cheap. Expenditure by the British State in 2000, for example, on “*social welfare*”, taken as a percentage of GDP was 26%. Ten years later it had risen to 28% of GDP (National Statistics Office 2011). The impression given by these commentators is that the increasing burden of State expenditure is an issue facing all of society; workers and capitalists alike.

This is not the case at all. Capitalism is a class divided society. The capitalist class own the means of production and distribution to the exclusion of the working class majority, that is, those who have to live off wages and salaries. And the raw resources, factories, transport and communication systems and so on is protected by the employers’ State which they have to pay for in taxation out of the unearned income of rent, interest and profit. The burden of State expenditure for health, education and old-age, therefore, falls on the capitalist class not the working class. Taxation and the burden of taxation is not an issue for the working class as demonstrated by the economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

The size, social function and cost of the British capitalist State, for example, was not a major concern faced by the ruling class in the last half of the 19th century; the period of “*laissez-faire*”. This was the time when British governments had little or no involvement in the business affairs of the capitalist class. Governments, both Tory and Liberal, largely followed the advice given by the political economist and philosopher, John Stuart Mill. In the chapter on “*The limits of the Province of Government*”, J. S. Mill wrote the following influential maxim in support of “*laissez-faire*” or freedom from government interference in commodity production and exchange for profit:

The business of life is better performed when those who have an immediate interest in it are left to take their own course, uncontrolled either by the mandate of the law or by the meddling of the public functionary (PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, 1909, Book V, Chapter XI, p. 952).

In adhering to the policy of *laissez-faire*, government expenditure was kept to a minimum with political disagreement within the ruling class centred principally on either raising revenue or arranging through their political parties which section of the propertied class would endure the burden of taxation.

As Professor Edwin Cannan wrote in respect to rateable and general taxation:

... the more any particular expense could be placed upon the general taxes rather than local rates, the less would be the burden upon immovable property. Hence the struggle between “the ratepayer” and “the taxpayer” which forms a remarkable feature in the history of English public finance in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning, ..., of the twentieth” (THE HISTORY OF LOCAL RATES IN ENGLAND 1912 chap. VI, *The local Ratepayer against the National Taxpayer*, 912, ch. VI. p. 132 1912).

Because the cost of government was very low the capitalists retained almost all of their income and were able to accumulate vast fortunes like Lord Armstrong the multi-millionaire engineering magnate and arms manufacturer, whose company sold guns to both sides of the American Civil War. In 1880, for example, budget expenditure represented only 8% of Gross National Product (GNP). In 1980 it was 46%, by 1989 it had dropped to 39%, in 2004 it had increased to 42.6% and by 2009 it was 49% (OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS 2010).

Taxation in 1880 was low. There was no Income Tax (PAYE) on workers’ wages. Even the amount of tax paid by a very rich person (i.e. someone with an annual unearned income corresponding to £750,000 in 2009) was only about 2%. Now it is 40% (the standard rate is 20%). In 1880 there was no Corporation Tax on company profits. In 2009 the standard rate is 30% on amounts of profit over £1.5 million, with a lower rate of 19% for small companies. And in 1880 there was a somewhat complicated “death duty” but it was nothing like as high as the 40% Inheritance Tax payable on the amount of an estate above £325,000.

Today supporters of capitalism point to the appearance of costly social reforms at the beginning of the 20th century

as the primary cause in the decline of British competitiveness on the world market. They point to two social reforms in particular; the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act and the 1911 National Health Insurance Act as the villains of the piece but the reality is different. These two social reforms were indeed enacted by the Liberal Government who paid for them by taxing the rich. By 1914, 970,000 workers were receiving pensions, at an annual cost to the Treasury of over £12 million (D. Powell, *THE EDWARDIAN CRISIS*, p.29, 1996). However, the cost of paying for these social reforms, which incidentally benefitted the employers, did not dent the wealth and privilege of the capitalist class. Between 1909 and 1911, 1% of the population owned 70% of all accumulated wealth compared with 24% of accumulated wealth in 2004 (Stuart Lansley, *RICH BRITAIN: THE RISE AND RISE OF THE NEW SUPER WEALTHY*, 2006). It was in paying for the First World War which cut into the wealth of the capitalist class, a cost of some \$35,334,012,000 (WIKIPEDIA).

The 2004 rise in the amount of accumulated wealth going to the top 1% calls for comment since it took place under a Labour government. Labour always paints the Tories as the friends of the rich. In fact, from 1996 Labour served the interests of the capitalist class more assiduously than previous Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher and John Major. According to Peter Mandelson, the Labour Party was “*relaxed with the filthy rich*” and many in his party, like the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, became “*filthy rich*” too – his present annual income is estimated at £60 million (The DAILY MAIL 17th August 2010).

The use of the Welfare State, as a political term, came from the German phrase “*Wohlfahrtsstaat*” used to describe the Bismarckian social insurance system of the 1870’s). The scheme was studied at first hand by Lloyd George before his own social reforms were introduced in the UK at the start of the Twentieth Century. The term “*welfare state*” was introduced into English in the 1930s when the historian Alfred Zimmern used it to describe the system of social security in Britain in comparison to the type of reforms being enacted at the time in Hitler’s Germany. Its first appearance in print came during the Second World War in Archbishop Temple’s pamphlet, *CITIZEN AND CHURCHMAN* (1941). In the United States, “*the welfare state*”, became associated with a slide towards “*Socialism*” and “*Communism*” leading to the recent absurd charge made by Republicans against President Obama and his health reforms that he is a revolutionary “*Marxist*”. Obama is no more a revolutionary Marxist than Cuba’s Fidel Castro.

History is full of examples of farce and tragedy and this applies to the politics associated with the “*Welfare State*”. The “*Welfare State*” is claimed, misleadingly, by its supporters and detractors alike, to be an example of “*Socialism in practice*”. In fact it was a deliberate response by the ruling class and its politicians, in late 19th century Germany, to attack the growing political influence of the German Social Democratic Party, then still nominally under the influence of Marx and Engels. These social reforms were then imported by the Liberals into Britain in an attempt to stop the growth and influence of the anti-working class Labour Party. Similar policies were then adopted by the Social Democrats in post-war Weimer in an attempt to make capitalism more efficient and after the Second World War adopted by the Attlee Labour Government for similar reasons. However the “*welfare state*” was never socialist, nor was the NHS a “*Socialist institution*”. Socialism has never been established.

The post - Second World War reforms in Britain, agreed at the time by all the three main capitalist political parties, were not the sole ownership of the Labour Party but continued the trend of social reforms and the increased cost and burden for employers begun by the Liberal Party. The reforms were both an attempt to rationalise the previously failed practices originating from the Elizabethan Poor Laws along with the naive belief, held by politicians like Lord Beveridge, author of the 1942 report *SOCIAL INSURANCE AND ALLIED SERVICES*, that the five ‘*Giant Evils*’ of ‘*Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness*’ could be resolved through social reform rather than social revolution. These five social problems were not resolved by the enactment of social reforms despite increasing the vast sums of government money being spent, and they all still exist today as predicted by the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The SPGB wrote:

The Beveridge proposals will not solve the poverty problem of the working class. They will level the workers’ position as a whole... (it) is not a “new world of hope”, but a redistribution of misery (BEVERIDGE RE-ORGANISES POVERTY, 1946).

And indeed the Beveridge proposals did not herald at a “*new world of hope*”, just a redistribution of misery; a misery for the capitalist class who increasingly have to carry the burden of its cost – in 1948 the welfare state cost £15bn

while in 2010 it had risen to £152 bn (GUARDIAN 2nd July 2010) - and a misery for the working class who find themselves still confronted with the same five social problems caused by capitalism. Only the establishment of Socialism can ensure these entrenched problems caused by the workings of the profit system can give way to comfort, equality and freedom. As long as the capitalist class continues to pursue its anti-social drive to accumulate capital and make a profit so the working class will continue to face the five '*Giant Evils*' of '*Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness*'. And the worst of these five social problems is "*ignorance*"; that is, the political ignorance of non-Socialist workers who periodically give their support to politicians at local and general elections.

The "*welfare state*" functions only to serve the welfare of the capitalist class by having an educated, fit and healthy workforce to exploit. After all, the employers carry the burden of having to pay for it. Social reforms cannot end poverty, unemployment and unmet social needs of workers because the existence of the private ownership of the means of production and distribution and the profit motive comes first. Two centuries of social reforms have not ended the social problems facing the working class. Now the capitalist class, under pain of foreign competition, cannot afford these social reforms at their current cost so they are being watered down or abolished altogether. Social reforms can be given by politicians with the one hand but easily and swiftly taken away by the other.

Trade Unions striking and marching against the reduction in State spending by the government on "social services" and pensions will not end the problems confronting the working class. The intense competition faced by British capitalism on the world market is one of the central issues determining government policy. The issue of competition requires government to cut back on State expenditure, to scale-back the size of the State, reduce debt, and support employers in their attempt to make workers work longer and harder for less pay. Workers must realise that the profit system exists to serve the interests of employers to retain their lives of privilege and comfort - not the working class. Workers have no interest in capitalism and the concerns of the employers. Instead of dealing with the economic effects of the profit system, workers should take conscious and political action, as a Socialist majority, to establish a Socialist framework conducive to meeting people's needs no matter what they are.

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British Capitalism and Competition from China and India

The development of capitalism in China and India during the past seventy years has taken a different historical route from British capitalism during the same period; primitive capital accumulation gave way to a wild-west capitalism in which capitalists drew on a vast pool of impoverished migrant workers from the countryside to create a large and exploitable workforce underpinned by "*a reserve army of the unemployed*" (Marx). Growth rates have also outstripped Britain. The rate of growth in Britain in 2010 has been 1.51% (the economy is currently passing through a periodic trade depression) but the rate of growth in China has been 10.3% and in India 10.4% (International Monetary Fund 2010).

In 1989, there were already about 30 million migrant workers in China. In 1993, the number increased to 62 million and by the end of 2006 to 131.8 million. These 131 million migrant workers accounted for 23 percent of the rural workforce. Labour was therefore cheap and expendable. The living and working conditions of many of these workers were not far removed from those described by Engels in the Manchester slums and cotton factories of the 1840s (see THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND, 1844). And life is cheap in industrial production. In 2006, 127,000 Chinese workers died in accidents in the workplace (BBC NEWS 29th August 2006) while in 2007, 3800 miners died in accidents (TERRADAILY January 13th 2008). According to the International Labour Organisation (2010), 45,000 workers in India are killed annually in production.

Chinese migrant labour from the countryside has meant that the class struggle has been heavily weighted in favour of the capitalist class which has developed and flourished, following economic reforms of the economy during the early 1980s, under the umbrella of the Chinese capitalist State. There are now 115 dollar billionaires in China with only the US exceeding this number (FORBES RICH LIST, March 2011). And the capitalist class in the US and Europe,

who are forced to compete with the Chinese capitalists on the world market, have noticed with alarm the respective cost differentials in State spending between their own countries and China. The US government, for example, has to service \$2 trillion in debt through interest payments, a problem China is not saddled with. China has not displaced the US as the major world economic power but is a major threat.

Chinese and Indian capitalists are not burdened with the high cost of “*social services*” found in the, US, Britain and elsewhere in Europe. According to the WORLD LABOUR REPORT 2000, government expenditure in 2000 on what is called “*social security*”, as a percentage of GDP, was respectively only 1.6% in India and 3.6% in China. The amount of government expenditure in India on social security has remained almost constant over the last decade whereas in China it has now dropped to 0.5% of GDP (CHINA DAILYNEWS 21st December 2010). If a worker is unemployed in China and India, either they have to rely on family and friends or they starve. According to a 2005 World Bank estimate, 41.6% of the total Indian population falls below the UN poverty line of \$1.25 a day. Meanwhile the charity, China Poverty-Relief Fund, has released statistics showing that nearly 30 million Chinese live in absolute poverty. Another 60 million have incomes below 865 yuan (about \$100) a year, well below the \$1 a day that the World Bank takes as its standard definition of absolute poverty (ASSOCIATED PRESS 21st September 2005).

In a BBC report “FROM IRAQ TO AFGHANISTAN”, James Mathai, a 44-year-old chef from India's southern state of Kerala, said that the chance to make money would take him anywhere in the world. Mr Mathai said: “*Without risk we can't earn much*”. He was one of around 50 workers from India interviewed who were willing to take the risk and re-locate themselves at a US base in war-torn Afghanistan. According to the report many of the Indian workers said it was far better to work in a war zone than suffer the fate of being unemployed in India (BBC NEWS 4th August 2004). And 23 migrant workers from China drowned in Morecombe in 2004 when harvesting cockles in a desperate bid to make money. The streets of British capitalism are not paved with gold but are harsh and brutal.

In China and India working hours are longer than in Britain - 12 hours a day is often the norm for many workers - and to employ workers does not carry the overheads and health and safety legislation found in Britain, making it attractive to multi-nationals to re-locate and set up businesses there. Increasingly companies in Britain are tapping into an educated workforce in India to exploit workers without even having to employ them under British labour legislation and the myriad of social reforms enacted since the Factory Acts in the early 19th century. The labour market is now a truly global market of class exploitation.

Architectural and engineering practices in Britain, for example, can enter directly into the labour markets in India. They can employ architectural and engineering technicians who produce detailed computer-generated drawings in electronic format which are then transmitted back to Britain by e-mail attachments at a fraction of the cost required to employ similar CAD technicians in Britain (see OECD Report Architectural Services in Global Trade in Professional Services by R. E. Keune FAIA 2007). These competitive trends on the world labour market act as a downward pressure on wages and salaries but they can be counterbalanced by other factors such as the class struggle and the trade cycle. Political commentators in Britain do not inform their readership about the existence of the class struggle in China and India, particularly the struggle by workers for higher wages and better working conditions. The Chinese Communist Party- led trade unions are seen, quite rightly, by many workers as unhelpful and working against their interests. Unofficial strikes by workers have been successful despite trade unionists being imprisoned or physically attacked by the police. In fact, workers in both China and India have been organising and pressing for higher wages, often with success, when economic conditions allow. Multi-national companies who relocated to India and China a decade ago to exploit cheap labour are now faced with much higher wage costs as workers in the booming areas of the economy have secured higher wage increases. Even some call-centres, like those operated by Santander and United Utilities have been re-located from India back to Britain due to rising costs.

According to a recent article in the GUARDIAN (17th June 2010), there have been numerous unofficial strikes in China. Chang Kai, professor of labour relations and law at Renmin University, said the number had increased by 30% per year. One of the reasons given in the report is that as the “*one-child*” family planning policy starts to reduce the number of workers coming onto the labour market a labour shortage of skilled workers has allowed the improved effectiveness of worker organisation and greater activism at high-profile foreign firms. Japanese firms have disproportionately been the focus of many of the reported strikes. The Toyota Gosei car parts plant, in Tianjin, was shut down by a strike until the management promised to negotiate higher wages. Three Honda plants in Guangdong

have been affected, along with a Hyundai factory in Beijing and a Taiwanese rubber products manufacturer in Shanghai. According to XINHUA news agency, the fast food franchise KFC has conceded to a union demand for minimum monthly pay of 900 yuan (£90), up by 200 yuan. As a result of this trend Chinese companies have located to Africa to exploit cheaper labour there, a continent where Chinese capitalism has been carrying out trade since 1949. Nearly 700 Chinese companies currently operate from 49 African counties (NEW STATESMAN 4th July 2005).

In times of good trade, workers can and do increase their wage income, not because of the philanthropy of the capitalist class who want to pay workers as little as possible, but by threatening to disrupt the employer's profit stream through industrial action. The class struggle in China and India is no different. Organisation in trade unions has long been of value to workers and will remain so, but it is an illusion to suppose, as some workers do, that the unions can end exploitation and abolish the capitalist system. Two factors decide the issue. In the first place the employers have much larger finances at their disposal than have the unions and can afford to stand out longer if the unions seek to prolong a strike. Furthermore, the employers can always count on the backing of the government in such a dispute. No matter whether workers are successful in gaining higher wages and better working conditions they are always dealing with the effects of capitalism. To change that framework to a Socialist one requires workers seeing that they have identical class interests no matter where they live and act in accordance with the SPGB's OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

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Trade and Capitalism's Wars

There are a number of factors about trade and capitalism's wars.

Capitalism is not just a collection of manufacturers and traders. First and foremost it is a collection of 195 nation states, each with its own armed forces to protect its privileged class against its own working class against other states.

Second, not all conflicts within capitalism end in war. Sometimes a powerful country might exercise control over a weaker country merely by threatening war.

Third, there are usually divided interests within the capitalist class itself. One such conflict is between import and export capitalists each of them pulling in different directions.

Fourth, trade conflicts are not only about export markets but are also about import markets.

And fifth, while all capitalists generally support a government at war with another country, sometimes sections of the capitalist class are deeply opposed to the war. Interests in the circles around Lord Rothermere (DAILY MAIL), particularly in the Tory Party, have been deeply opposed to both the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Class interests around the Liberal Democratic Party and the Green Party were also opposed to the war.

War in capitalism has a seeming paradox. Simultaneously people are all for war and against it. How does this come about?

Some academics and politicians have said that it is people's natural fear and hatred which makes war possible. This is an erroneous statement. Those who put forward this proposition put the cart before the horse.

People - and by "*people*" we mean a sizeable portion of the working class who in fact have no interest in capitalism's wars - support war because of government propaganda which is reinforced by the media and the Church. Government propaganda tries to create fear and hatred among the population where none had formerly existed. Governments going to war deliberately create an environment of fear and hatred.

If the proposition that people are innately violent was true why, outside war, are the day-to-day relations between people generally peaceful, with violence and murder only a minority occurrence? And why is it that the military have to depersonalise recruits to make them kill and even then only a small percentage are able to carry out the function of professional killers?

And another question can be put against this proposition. If it is human nature that seeks an outlet in war, why did the governments in two world wars have to conscript 90% of the armed services against their will? If it was in people's human nature to kill the armed forces would have had no difficulty finding willing recruits. Why did the government have to drag the working class into the armed forces to kill and be killed?

That people were naturally war-like was a specious argument used by politicians like Mussolini. He used to go around Italy saying that it was people's violent passions that had to have an outlet in war. This view of human behaviour was ridiculed by an Italian cartoonist. He showed Mussolini in a big hall berating an audience saying that they were all violent and needed a war as an outlet for their passions. The cartoonist showed the hall filled with sheep.

Of course, in the real sense of the word workers are sheepish in their behaviour like Orwell's collective two minutes of hate in Nineteen Eight Four. When politicians like Mussolini whip up hysteria for war most workers allow themselves to be led to the slaughter.

One thing you will be told by governments who go to war is that they are peace-loving and do not want war but the other side is aggressive and wants war.

The same is true of conservative historians and cheer leaders for the British Empire like Andrew Roberts who, when commenting recently on the First World War, said it was all the fault of the beastly Germans for invading Belgium and forcing good-old Britain to enter the war to support the underdog (DAILY MAIL 13.11.2010).

Let us recall the nationalist William Shakespeare who wrote of : "*This happy breed of men, this little world. This precious stone set in a silver sea*", (RICHARD II Act ii, Scene 1). How does British capitalism stand up to the claim of being a peace-loving "*other Eden*" and "*demi-Paradise*" surrounded by a sea of envy?

A casual count of wars Britain has been involved in since the beginning of the 19th century runs to over 35, the list including several wars in Afghanistan, conflict with Argentina over the Falklands, the Boer Wars, the Crimean War, India, Korea, Opium Wars against China, the Suez War, the First World War, the Second World War, war against Serbia, war against Iraq, a war against the US, and wars against the Zulus. Does it really mean that this peaceful country where we happen to live has had to deal with so many violent countries hell bent on war? Is British capitalism a benign oasis surrounded by evil governments and individuals who want to attack the "*British way of life*"?

We could pick out many wars for scrutiny. Let us choose the Zulu wars since one of these wars of that name was made famous by the actor Michael Caine and the battle of Rorke's Drift, with a film constantly shown on television to please assorted nationalists, racists and the politically stupid so they might rejoice in the "*glory*" of the British Empire. However Socialists can ask a very serious question: what did the Zulus ever do to people living in Britain? Nothing what so ever. This is the reality of the situation. Zululand had become a powerful kingdom under the rule of King Shaka in the early 19th century, but by 1870 European colonial expansion was starting to hem it in. The British were expanding from the south in Natal and the Boers, Dutch settlers, were expanding from the West in the area known as the Transvaal which the British were to annex in 1877.

The British had seized their South African colonies during the Napoleonic Wars but these possessions had been beset with problems due to violence between the British, the Boers and local African kingdoms. The British plan was to unite black and white under their rule, but first the Zulu kingdom had to be removed. And this is precisely what the British did through the use of violent aggression and superior technology; the Enfield rifle versus the iklwa spear. It was just not cricket but then the blacks in South Africa were never seen as "*equals*" but, instead, as a source of cheap labour for the Boer farmers and for the British sugar plantations and mines (James O. Gump, THE DUST ROSE LIKE SMOKE: THE SUBJUGATION OF THE ZULU AND THE SIOUX, Bison Books, ch 5 pp. 73-93, 1996).

Of course the same bogus arguments of moral superiority used by British imperialists in the 19th century to justify their rape, pillage and plunder are used today by other capitalist governments to justify going to war. Donald Rumsfeld used the following excuse about how the US being a peace-loving democracy never intended to invade Iraq for its oil. This is what Donald Rumsfeld said:

We don't take our forces and go around the world and try to take other people's real estate or other people's resources, their oil. That's just not what the United States does. We never have, and we never will. That's not how democracies behave <http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aaIraqoil.htm>

No one believed him and it is doubtful Rumsfeld did himself.

Socialism and War

There is only one thing which has not been tried in order to prevent war and international rivalry. There has never been Socialism in the world. With socialism there will not be any more war; there will be no armed forces for the propertied class to protect its property; there would not be production for sale and profit; no markets; there would be no need to protect raw resources, trade routes and spheres of influence. The world would not be divided into separate capitalist nations fighting each other; there would not be governments using nationalism and religion to poison the minds of workers and there will be no conflict between capitalists and workers because there will be no profit system and an exploiting capitalist class.

Socialism will be organised world-wide on the basis of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society. Production would be solely and directly for use. The function of production would be to make goods available to all society. There would be free access. To achieve socialism requires foremost, the winning over of the working class to an understanding and acceptance of the socialist case. It is a socialist principle that you cannot contemplate socialism being run except by socialists. Socialism is not possible until a socialist majority democratically gain control of the machinery of government and the means of production.

A socialist working class have got to take conscious political action within a principled socialist party to get democratic control of the machinery of government, including the armed forces. This means a socialist majority has to gain control of parliament and local councils. This is the only way for the capitalist class to be disposed and the establishment of socialism secured. And in ridding the world of war and conflict: “*Socialism will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race and sex*” (Clause 4 DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN. 1904).

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A Divided World Capitalism

Capitalism is an international social system of class exploitation but it does not unite the 195 capitalist countries of the world. There is no “*international community*” only a world divided into aggressive and competitive nation states.

Take Ireland for example; to steal a march on its rivals it has a far lower corporation tax in order to attract capitalists to its country who would otherwise have invested elsewhere. The Russian Federation asserts pressure on adjoining countries with its control of gas supplies. A cabal of victorious post-Second World War governments at the United Nations assert their will on weaker countries and so on. To believe, like the Labour government once believed, that a government could and should have an “*ethical policy*” for international affairs is just fantasy politics; the powerful can do what they like.

Marx and Engels set the scene in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO when they wrote:

“...the bourgeoisie finds itself in constant battle at all times with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries” So why does capitalism cause conflict among all these competing countries?

The simple reason is that the capitalist class in all countries are in conflict with each other. You have to start with the way in which capitalist countries came into existence. Marx and Engels called it *“political centralisation”*. This is how they put it:

“The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff” (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

A capitalist country when it establishes itself, tries to bring into its orbit large exploitable populations, raw resources, access to food and an easily defended frontier –look at the recent division of the Sudan into North and South Sudan, and how they were set up and the tensions over resources like oil. All the other capitalist countries try to do the same, some more successfully than others.

The process of the development of the nation state can be seen in the history of the 19th century particularly with the unification of states to create Italy and Germany. The reverse also takes place with the dissolution of empires as in the case of India and Russia in the 20th century where India broke up into three separate countries, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and with the break-up of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation and a myriad of other sovereign countries including Georgia were formed out of the old USSR. Later some countries, like Latvia and Estonia, joined the military alliance, NATO, and the European Union.

Wars often take place when countries form themselves into separate nation states. This was the case with Yugoslavia which broke up into warring countries with its attendant civil wars and genocide. Some conflicts are going on in established nation states, like the nationalist struggle of the Basque province in Spain where a nationalist ruling class wants independence. Similarly there are national movements in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. There was a recent attempt by French speaking Canadians in Quebec to form an independent state. Then there are the Kurds spread over a number of countries who want their own nation state. However, as soon as these states are formed the conflict continues.

The conflict within and between nation states arise out of their capitalist character. They all represent class social systems of exploitation in which class relations and the class struggle dominate. All capitalist countries are committed to the production of commodities for sale for profit. They all have a price system, a wages system, a labour market and employers and employees.

These countries have a working class employed for wages and salaries who do not own the means of production and distribution which includes factories, communication and transport systems and distribution points like warehouses and so on. The means of production are owned by the exploiting class. The working class produce all the social wealth but do not own the means of production and distribution nor do they own the products of their labour.

And in all countries of the world you get inequalities of wealth. This applied to countries like Russia which misleadingly claimed it was *“Socialist”*. Soon after the Bolsheviks came to power Lenin put into practice the policy that everyone should be paid the same. However, as Marx pointed out, capitalism cannot be run on the equality of wages; it was *“an insane wish never fulfilled”*:

This is what Marx wrote:

“The cry for an equality of wages rests, therefore, upon a mistake, is an insane wish never fulfilled...Upon the basis of the wages system the value of labouring power is settled like that of every other commodity; and as different kinds of labouring power have different values, or require different quantities of labour for their production, they must fetch different prices in the labour market. To clamour for equal or even equitable retribution on the basis of the

wages system is the same as to clamour for freedom on the basis of the slavery system” (WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT, Selected Works Vol. 1 p. 426).

After a year Lenin had to drop the policy and revert to what had existed previously.

With regards to inequality in Britain, some 35 years ago, in 1976 the Labour Government commissioned a comprehensive study of the ownership of wealth. The study has never been repeated.

The Royal Commission on Income ascertained that of the total accumulated wealth of the UK, 1% of the adult population owned 25% of all accumulated wealth. 55% of the adult population owned 50% of all accumulated wealth.

And the top 20% owned 85% of all accumulated wealth. The poorest 80% were left with 15% of that total. It is to protect this privileged class position that police and armed forces are set up to protect property owners from their own working class and from foreign capitalists. Each government in the world has to tackle the same fundamental issue.

The problem of raw resources is a particular problem all governments have to face. If the raw resources are not within their own frontiers, governments have to secure them either by trade or force which usually means war. Wars today are usually fought over oil and gas supplies and mineral reserves According to Klaus Toepfler, Director-General of the United Nations Environment Programme, war will increasingly take place over the location and supply of drinking water (SCIENCE DAILY January 6th 1999) from oil wars to water wars.

This destructive competition does not have to be the case. In Socialism, with the Earth's resources under common ownership and democratic control by all of society and where there will be no competitive nation states, production and distribution will take place just to meet human need.

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Opposition To All Political Parties: 1931 Govan Debate (Continued from SOCIALIST STUDIES No. 80).

Mr M' Kay, Socialist Labour Party:

After listening very carefully to the lecture delivered by Mr. Shaw (I have no intention of calling him comrade) I am trying to find just exactly where I stand. I am a Socialist, but I understand that, when we understand what Socialism is, we differ in degree. One thing we are agreed on, that is, the workers are quite as poor at the end of every year as they were at the beginning of the same year. That happens in every country with the exception of Socialist Russia. I put it to the speaker: he wants the majority of the workers to become class-conscious, he still wants that after all the years the S.P.G.B. has been preaching the principles of their doctrine to the workers. In spite of all their efforts the workers have no time for them. The speaker is not a Socialist; his party is not a Socialist party; if it was the workers would have more time for it.

Industrial Unionism Shaw claims is the same as Trade Unionism. Such a statement only shows his ignorance on the subject. Industrial Unionism is altogether different from Trade Unionism in that it will act along class lines as opposed to craft lines of the present day Trade Unions. The waste of time and energy of hundreds of Trade Unions in this country is made plain when we realise that only twenty Industrial Unions cover and control industry in Soviet Russia.

The S.P.G.B. is continually telling us that we must have a majority of workers class-conscious before we can have

Socialism. If a majority of that nature is necessary then many future generations are doomed never to see Socialism. I have my doubts about such a theory. In the near future there will be such conditions as will compel the workers to take action. The majority may not understand the Materialist Conception of History, may not be able to understand and expound the intricate Marxian Theory of Value, but they will understand that their class must take over and run the economic system in their own interests.

Mr Kilpatrick, B.S.I.S.L.P.

The speaker, Mr Shaw, opened his address in his usual slovenly manner by referring to the Anarchist B.S.I.S.L.P. as being the owners of these premises. Such a statement was ridiculous as it was well known that the premises were only rented by the B.S.I.S.L.P.

Another slovenly statement was that; the basis of ownership since Primitive Communism had ended had not changed. It was patent to all that we have now arrived at the stage of the Trust, Combine, etc. The speaker must have had some glimmering of this when he first of all spoke of the private ownership of wealth and later on referred to the class ownership. This was a change the speaker and his party should take into consideration as it may alter their outlook a little when they examine Industrial Unionism.

The principal difference between the S.P.G.B. and the B.S.I.S.L.P. is that the Socialist Party believes only in political action, while the B.S.I. with its broader outlook understands that Socialist philosophy is all embracing, thus including the place where goods are produced. The B.S.I. therefore advocates the economic and political organisation of the working class.

The working class has been brought into existence by the Capitalist Class itself, and, being the mass of the people with no property tradition does not know where its real interests lie. On the economic field the workers are all at sixes and sevens because of their many Trade Unions, but a class instrument is being forged –The Industrial Union. This instrument will be perfected to take control of production and distribution. It is the only organisation that is capable of performing a task.

Shaw did not define what Socialism was. Socialism meant that society would own and control the means whereby society lived.

If you understand how old parties came into existence with their class slogan of “*Liberty, Equality and Fraternity*” you will know that it was because they owned the economic means which enabled them to rule. The class which owns the wealth is the class which dictates.

After all has been said, and all that may be said to the contrary, it is clear that the workers must develop the arms of their movement, the economic and the political. (Applause).

W. Travers, S.P.G.B.

It is rather curious that in spite of all that has been said about Industrial Unionism, not one of its advocates tonight has attempted to explain what it is. We had been solemnly assured that Industrial Unionism was an instrument by which the workers could control industry. Were we supposed to become enthusiastic about something which had not been explained? Industrial Unionism as a matter of fact was a flyblown species of thinly disguised Anarchism. The home of Industrial Unionism was America where Mr. Trautmann, Mr. De Leon. E. V. Debs and others had advocated it as the means of emancipating the proletariat. Its central idea was that workers should organise on the economic field with the view of grabbing the means of production from the Boss. Workers had not, so far, accepted this theory which would bring them up against the murderous forces of the State. Perhaps this was the reason so many workers were alive today.

Before I became a Socialist I used to hold propaganda meetings in Ireland with the late Jim Connolly. Jim, unfortunately, took a trip to America and had a conversation with Daniel De Leon, a conversation from which he never recovered. He came back to Ireland and acquainted many of us with the new revolutionary tactic –Industrial Unionism. At first we received this new idea with enthusiasm, but, afterwards having thoroughly examined Industrial

Unionism we saw, clearly, that all the efforts put forth by workers organised in Industrial Unions or any other kind of economic organisations would be futile so long as the Ruling Class had control of political power. Attempts had been made in the past in America and elsewhere at forming Industrial Unions for the purpose of “*Seizing and Holding*” the means of production but in every case dissension among those organised had paralysed their activities. This disproved the theory of the Industrial Unionist who thought that all would be well if only the workers could be organised on an industrial basis instead of the present basis. Even if they were successful in forming Industrial Unions as desired they would still have to overcome the military forces of the State.

The only way of emancipation was that advocated by the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Industrial Unionism, Social Reform. Seize and Hold methods and all the other alternatives put forward by the multifarious so-called Working Class organisations were so many obstacles which the workers must overcome before they can abolish Capitalism. Socialism is the only hope of the workers, all else being illusion. It was up to all workers present to study the position of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and, on understanding it, to join that organisation to take part in the great work of abolishing Capital and establishing Socialism.

Mr. C. Martin, B.S.I.S.L.P.

Mr Travers in his contribution has done nothing other than attack the Anarchists. Travers and Shaw want the workers here to believe the wonderful S.P.G.B., but if they would come regularly to these meetings and get an understanding of Industrial Unionism they could then speak on that subject more intelligently. The S.P.G.B. were, in spite of all they said to the contrary, mere physical force Anarchists. They wanted to obtain control of political power in order to knock hell out of all who opposed them. This proved they were Anarchists under their skins. The orthodox Anarchists in the past had made many mistakes, but they had guts. The S.P.G.B. were all mistake and no guts.

I would like to ask Saint Travers and Saint Shaw (I wish they were Saints) a few questions. What did Marx mean when he wrote in the Communist Manifesto that “*the workers must organise into a class and consequently into a political party*”? Shaw had objected to his [Martin’s] explanation of this passage on a previous occasion and he would now like to hear Shaw’s explanation. The S.P.G.B. had their own peculiar interpretations of such quotations from Marx. That was the sort of people they were. The quotation simply meant that the workers must organise at the point of production.

Another point: What did Marx mean when he says in the “COMMUNIST MANIFESTO” that we must wrest by degrees all property from the hands of the masters?

The difference between the B.S.I.S.L.P. and the S.P.G.B. lies in the different concepts of the State as held by the two organisations. The S.P.G.B. concept is muddled. They want a majority of workers to understand Socialism and to get control of the State through the ballot box. We will not get a majority for three thousand years or so. Marx says we must establish a Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The S.P.G.B. being opposed to Marx on this point, I would like to know what are they going to do with the State when it dies out ?

The Chairman announced at this stage that the meeting was now open for questions.

Questions to be asked only of the Speaker or of anyone who had taken part in discussion.

Question: When did Jim Connolly join the Socialist Party of Ireland? I deny that he did so. How can we overthrow Capitalism by the methods advocated by the S.P.G.B.?

Answer by Comrade Travers S.P.G.B.

I was with Connolly when he joined that opportunist body known as The Socialist Party of Ireland and I attacked him repeatedly for doing so. The method of the S.P.G.B. is the only method applicable to highly developed Capitalist countries and is the scientific method advocated by Marx. Industrial Unionism, street fighting and other methods of force are doomed to failure and only mean another bloodbath to those workers who would be silly enough to attempt them. Class conscious political action to get control of the State machine is the method –the only method open today.

Question: Was not Daniel De Leon speaking on the same platform in 1886 and assisting Henry George, an anti-Socialist into Congress?

Answer by Charles Martin B.S.I.S.L.P:

Yes.

Question: Is a director of a company a member of the working class?

Answer by Mr. Kilpatrick: B.S.I.S.L.P:

Yes, if he is dependent on his salary. No, if of independent means.

Question: Is the difference between the S.P.G.B. and the B.S.I.S.L.P. that the S.P.G.B. takes political action only whilst the B.S.I. takes both political and economic action?

Answer by Comrade SHAW:

The S.P.G.B. advocates that the workers must organise on the political and economic field on class lines before they can abolish Capitalism. Political action is necessary to end the system, and the act of revolution is political.

Question: Is it not a fact that Anarchist methods crept into the S.L.P. during the years 1900 and 1907?

Answer by Charles Martin:

There is a danger of such a thing happening but we guard against it in the same manner as the S.P.G.B. does –by insisting that members of our organisation be educated along the line of our principles. *(to be continued)*

The Govan Debate – Opposition to all Political Parties - of 1931 will be concluded in the next edition of SOCIALIST STUDIES. In the meantime readers can read the entire debate on-line at www.socialiststudies.org.uk and can buy a copy of the original transcript for £2 made payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES to cover printing, packaging and postage. There is a danger that original documents like paintings or architectural drawings can become a commodity fetish or seen as more important than the content of the text itself. What historical documents we have will be deposited electronically on our site with free access for those interested in reading them rather than being stored in universities solely for access by academics or being found sold in second hand bookshops. These documents are the work of Socialists working within the framework of the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES in the struggle to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society, which is the sole objective of the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain.

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Marx, Engels and the Russian Revolution

Dear Comrades I have read with interest various articles in SOCIALIST STUDIES that claim that the Russian Revolution was not a Marxist revolution. However I feel that I should point out that Marx & Engels put their signatures to the Russian Revolution in January 1882: refer to the last paragraph of the link below:

http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk/marxism/cm/cm_p02.htm

Admittedly Marx & Engels would undoubtedly not have approved of the secret police terror state that was created in Russia, particularly the Great Purge under Joseph Stalin from 1936 to 1938. However this society was the product of the isolation of the revolution to Russia which led to a siege mentality.

Marx & Engels had not thought that 'Socialism in one Country' was possible; believing that the Russian revolution could only succeed if it was supported by revolution in the West, which was probably the origin of Trotsky's doctrine of permanent revolution.

Yours sincerely, Derek R Crawford, Norfolk.

Reply to Derek Crawford

Thank you for your email, which raises a point that has been asked of this party from 1918 onwards.

It seems that you have misunderstood or misread the careful wording by Marx and Engels at the tail end of in their 1882 preface to a Geneva reprint of THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO. That preface, reproduced in Engels's preface to a German edition in 1890, was translated into Russian by Plekhanov – not, as was later claimed, by Bakunin or Vera Zasulich (see THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO OF K. MARX AND F. ENGELS by D. Ryazanoff, 1922 – trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul, 1930, p262, n.)

The key question posed briefly at the end of this preface was this:

Will the Russian peasant communes (a primitive form of communal ownership of land which is already on the down grade) become transformed into the superior form of communist ownership of land, or will they have to pass through the same process of decay we have witnessed in the course of the historical evolution of the West?

... If the Russian revolution sounds the signal for a workers' revolution in the West, so that each becomes the complement of the other, then the prevailing form of communal ownership of land in Russia may serve as the starting-point for a communist course of development.

Marx and Engels were aware of the speculation among the Russian Narodniks of the period, many of whom held that Russia, precisely because it was still so backward and relatively primitive in its development, was precisely for this reason capable of leapfrogging capitalism and bypassing this stage of social evolution, so as to go straight from its current system to a system of common ownership, Socialism/Communism.

The economic system in Russia, as Marx and Engels pointed out in this preface, was one where “*more than half the land is owned in common by the peasantry*”. As for capitalist industrial development, this was still only active in a relatively few regions and cities, while the bourgeois landowning system was still in its early stages of development. It was a major exporter of wheat, furs, timber and other basic commodities but not an exporter or producer of much in the way of manufactured goods. Even at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, the majority of the workforce were still peasants working the land, and only a minority were wage-workers. In short, there was in most of Russia still very little of a proletariat, a wage-slave class.

We know from other writings by Marx – e.g. THE 18TH BRUMAIRE - that in his view the peasants were backward and conservative, uneducated, and not likely to support revolution. In Russia their thinking was dominated by the age-old superstitious mumbo-jumbo and icon- worshipping of the Orthodox Church, with its belief in icons that could do miracles, and in addition the traditional view of the Tsar as the ‘*Little Father of the People*’. Such old traditional beliefs were still dominant among the peasants of China at the time of the Maoist revolution. And in China even now there is still ancestor worship, while there are still modern Russians who worship medieval icons.

The revolutionary message of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO is addressed specifically to proletarians – to wage-workers, the working class. The peasants, since they still have some smallholding, some ownership of property or land, were - like small businessmen and shopkeepers - : very reluctant to get involved in anything like a revolution. Yet that is what the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO is essentially about: its message is that workers of all lands need to unite, to develop revolutionary class-consciousness and *emancipate themselves*.

Like the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, the DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the Socialist Party of Great Britain is emphatic on this point: the emancipation of the working class “*must be the work of the working class itself*”. The Socialist/Communist revolution has to be a class revolution, a bottom-up not a top-down one, since only

when the workers have developed a revolutionary class-consciousness can there be a revolution capable of overturning the class system. This was fundamental to Marx and Engels's view of the class struggle and its role in bringing about historic change.

While they were strongly opposed to the repression of the reactionary Tsarist regime and broadly sympathetic to the Russian revolutionaries of the 1880's, it is hard to read this passage as other than speculative. There are rather too many if's and maybe's in these sentences for one to reach a firm conclusion as to their expectations of a Socialist revolution in Russia. Marx and Engels were not dogmatic about what might happen in Russia in the future. In this passage you quoted, they wrote that: *"If the Russian revolution sounds the signal for a workers' revolution in the West... then the prevailing form of communal ownership of land in Russia may serve as the starting-point for a communist course of development"* (our emphasis). That is very far from your claim that in 1882 they had *"put their signatures to the Russian Revolution"*.

You also seem to be defending the repressive regime imposed by the Bolsheviks:

Admittedly Marx & Engels would undoubtedly not have approved of the secret police terror state that was created in Russia, particularly the Great Purge under Joseph Stalin from 1936 to 1938. However this society was the product of the isolation of the revolution to Russia which led to a siege mentality.

These sentences highlight your misunderstanding of the Russian Revolution. Purges started within weeks of the Bolsheviks seizing power, with the establishment of the Cheka – the Extraordinary Commission, which had power of life and death. The *"isolation of the revolution"* was a direct result of the fact that there was a lack of class consciousness, not just in Russia but in other countries such as Germany, France and Britain. After all, international class consciousness was not very likely, given that so many workers were involved in fighting against each other, putting aside any sense of class solidarity, instead becoming increasingly patriotic and chauvinistic. The SPGB was right in its assessment of this Bolshevik coup, e.g. in an article published in, THE SOCIALIST STANDARD (August 1918), *The Revolution in Russia – Where it Fails*:

Is this huge mass of people, numbering about 160,000,000 and spread over eight and a half millions of square miles, ready for Socialism? Are the hunters of the North, the struggling peasant proprietors of the South, the agricultural wage-slaves of the Central Provinces, and the industrial wage-slaves of the towns convinced of the necessity, and equipped with the knowledge requisite, for the establishment of the social ownership of the means of life? ...Unless a mental revolution such as the world has never seen before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than the world has ever recorded, the answer is "No!"

Lenin's idea of a an elite revolutionary vanguard leading ignorant masses was tested to destruction with the Russian revolution and a number of other copycat revolutions throughout the 20th century. That belief was contrary to the argument central to the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO and other writings of Marx and Engels, of Socialism being established by the working class; an argument based on the class struggle and rooted in revolutionary class consciousness.

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Tough Love - For Whom?

The DAILY TELEGRAPH in its leading article, *Tougher love is needed if we are going to recover* (June 18th 2011) bewailed the state of British competitiveness in the first decade of the 21st century. Written by a free market fundamentalist and supporter of Margaret Thatcher, the editorial said that the week the editorial was written an uncomfortable truth began to dawn. This is what the editorial said:

...that life is not only going to get tougher for most of Britain, but it needs to get tougher if the country is to compete as a 21st century powerhouse.

The editorial went on to state that the future will be one of “*increased competition and self-discipline*” and this in turn will have a profound effect on education, pensions and wages.

The reason given by the DAILY TELEGRAPH editorial is that British capitalism now operates in a global economy where billions of workers work far longer hours for less pay. Future workers, the editorial asserts, will have to be more competitive and less reliant on the State for benefits. The editorial went on to demand that the British government should adopt the minimal “*welfare*” practices of the US which give rise to tent cities and charity hand-outs. Typically, the urgent need for workers to consciously and politically organise to establish Socialism was not considered. The DAILY TELEGRAPH serves the interests of its owners not workers.

And the editorial concludes with the claim that:

The facts of life are conservative...only finely honed capitalism can deliver stable prosperity in an era of unstable globalisation.

This is not so. One of the many economic fictions held by defenders of the profit system is that a country can have constant and stable prosperity by following a particular economic policy, whether it is free market fundamentalism, state capitalism or Keynesianism. No economic policy can prevent the destructive anarchy of the trade cycle with its periodic high levels of bankruptcy and unemployment. Capitalism can never be “*finely honed*” or “*deliver stable prosperity*”. Wealth and privilege for the benefit of a minority, and misery, poverty and exploitation for the majority is what capitalism delivers.

The writer of the editorial in the DAILY TELEGRAPH is an uncritical fan of Margaret Thatcher and her policies, as is Ed Miliband, the Labour Party’s new leader. In this respect, it is useful to look at what the Socialist Party of Great Britain said about Margaret Thatcher’s popular capitalism and property-owning democracy some three decades ago in the 1980s at the height of her power and influence (see MRS THATCHER’S POPULAR CAPITALISM, www.socialiststudies.org.uk).

The policies that Thatcher pursued in the 1980’ were all in existence in the last quarter of the 19th century.

In 1875 there had been no inflation for a quarter of a century and the only nationalised industry was the Post Office. British manufacture was highly competitive; in fact Britain was then the workshop of the world. And there were no monopolies because; it was not until the 20th century that monopolies began to develop in Britain.

Government spending, in real terms, was only one fifth of what was in 1987 and there was no government borrowing. And government spending in relation to the total of the national income was only a fifth of what it was a century later.

Taxation was also low with income tax only three pence in the pound. Interest rates were generally low; the bank rate at that time was 3%, as against 9% bank minimum lending rate in 1987. The pound was also strong and was worth \$4.86 Dollars - that’s three times what it was a century later.

The trade unions were weak and small and subject to much tougher anti-trade union laws than they were even after the Thatcher anti-trade union reforms. There was no Labour Government to worry about, as there wasn’t even a Labour party until 1906. And finally the Prime Minister was the Tory idol, Benjamin Disraeli.

Now, with all these conditions contained in her economic policies Mrs Thatcher believed there would be no more trade depressions. In fact, 1875 was known to historians as the beginning of the Great Depression.

The Great Depression started in 1875 and lasted twenty years. And to give an idea of the problem it caused the capitalists and their politicians a description of it was given by Winston Churchill’s father, Lord Randolph Churchill, who was a Tory minister at the time. He made this speech in the middle of the Great Depression:

We are suffering from a depression of trade extending as far back as 1875, ten years of trade depression, even the most hopeful either among our capitalists or among our artisans can discover no signs of a revival, your iron

industry is dead, dead as mutton, your coal industries, which depend greatly on the iron industries, are languishing. Your silk industry is dead assassinated by the foreigner. Your woollen industry is in articulo mortis gasping and struggling. Your cotton industry is, seriously sick. The ship building industry which held out longest of all is come to a standstill. Turn your eyes where you will, survey any branch of British industry life you like, you will find signs of mortal disease

Now this was the twenty five years Great Depression, a depression that Mrs Thatcher and her free market evangelists in the DAILY TELEGRAPH believed and still believe should never happen if her policies were pursued today. But it did occur and it went on for twenty years. The economic depression merely marked the decline of British manufacturing in the world which has continued ever since.

At the time, they held lots of committees of enquiry, and produced all sorts of information but they did what capitalist politicians do after every depression. They said that they would make sure that it doesn't happen again, and of course it happens again scores of time; as indeed it happened under the Thatcher Conservative government in the 1980s the John Major Tory government in the 1990s, and, more recently, under the Gordon Brown Labour government with its boast that there was to be "no more boom and bust". And it will happen again in the future. Politicians and economists cannot prevent periodic economic crises.

The Facts of Life under Capitalism

Finally, what basis is there for the assertion by the DAILY TELEGRAPH editorial that the facts of life under capitalism are "*conservative*"? Why should parents instil into their children the capitalist "*virtues*", propagated by Thatcher when she was Prime Minister, of hard work and ruthless competition along with the attainment of high educational achievements necessary for survival by workers on the global labour market? The statement is as arrogant as it is wrong. Capitalism's facts of life, as they present themselves to workers, are not conservative but Socialist.

The editorial's statement is arrogant because it presumes that there is no alternative to the wages system when there is the opportunity for the working class to consciously and politically abolish capitalism and establish Socialism. The statement is also wrong as thousands of graduates are currently finding out to their cost. Graduates may want to work hard and compete for jobs but if it is not profitable for employers to employ them then they face unemployment and the job centre. And they also face the spite of newspaper editorials telling them that they are lazy, a burden on the capitalist class for drawing the dole, and life should be made even nastier for them than it currently is. It is doubtful that the editorial writer understands capitalism himself particularly if he believes in the free market. The labour market is never free but is instead enforced wage slavery.

So what are the facts of life from a Socialist perspective? Here are capitalism's facts of life in no particular order but they are all of primary importance:

- * Workers live under capitalism which is based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution from which they are excluded.
- * Production takes place for profit not in order to meet human need.
- * Social wealth is created solely by the working class through exploitation by the capitalist class in the productive process.
- * A class struggle exists over the intensity and extent of exploitation.
- * Capitalism causes poverty, war, unemployment and social alienation for the working class while the capitalist class live in comfort and privilege on the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.
- * Workers have no interest in capitalism and are the last class in human history to struggle to free itself from class exploitation and tyranny.

- * Workers have the same class interests as workers elsewhere in the world.
- * To free themselves from class exploitation workers have to pursue the class struggle consciously and politically as Socialists within a principled and democratic Socialist political party with only Socialism as its object.
- * The capitalist political parties, Labour, Green, Social Democratic, Conservative, British National Party etc. all exist to pursue the interest of the capitalist class, or in the case of the Socialist Workers Party and other similar organisations to establish nationalisation or State capitalism.
- * The State exists to further the interest and objective of the capitalist class not the working class; it is “*the executive of the bourgeoisie*” (Marx).
- * Socialism can be established by a Socialist majority through the revolutionary use of the vote and Parliamentary action.

These facts are not the facts the capitalist media, like the DAILY TELEGRAPH, want disseminated to the working class. The capitalist class has millions of pounds to spend on its lies while Socialists can barely afford the postage stamp for propagating the truth. But as Shakespeare wrote in THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: “*truth will out*”. And there are two very real social facts of life that are true and will not go away. First, capitalism can never be made to run in the interests of all society and, second, there is a Socialist alternative. Social systems can and do change. This is what working class parents should be telling their children.

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Divide and Rule

DIVIDE AND RULE Capitalism is a world-wide system of class exploitation where the means of production and distribution are privately owned, and protected by the machinery of government; the armed forces, police and the judiciary, for the benefit of a capitalist minority. Capitalism is run in the interest of the capitalist class. The capitalist class receive their unearned income through the exploitation of the working class majority who produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. Capitalism only benefits the interests of the capitalist class minority, allowing them to live a life of comfort, privilege and power.

Class exploitation takes place world-wide. The exploitation of wage labour is a process found in all countries whether it takes place within Chinese capitalism, Cuban capitalism or the capitalism found in the US and Europe. Capitalism causes the problems faced by the world’s working class: war, poverty, unemployment and social alienation. Capitalism prevents production and distribution from being used to meet people’s needs. Capitalism is “a fetter on production” giving rise to contradictions and conflicts, like the class struggle. During economic crises, for example, unsold commodities are stockpiled or destroyed. Workers are also made unemployed and machines remain idle. Consequently, world capitalism needs to be replaced by world Socialism.

At a global level, a world working class is in opposition to a world capitalist class over the ownership of the means for producing life; the raw resources, factories, communication and transport systems and distribution points. Workers have to sell their ability to work or what Marx called their “*labour power*” to employers for a either wage or salary. In the production process they are exploited and have their needs unmet or ignored. The class struggle has to be a political struggle.

However, the working class finds itself confined within the political contours of nation states. Each nation state has a capitalist class who owns the means of production and a working class who do not. The world, therefore, is divided into competing nation states under constant pressure to secure raw resources and defeat rival competitors, leading to the periodic use of armed force, violence and war. The class struggle within nation states is a primary feature of capitalism. It exists economically on a day-to-day basis over the rate and intensity of exploitation, and politically

over the ownership and direction of the means of production: either the continuation of commodity production and exchange for profit or the establishment of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Socialists have a very precise definition of the working class. The working class is composed of men and women who, excluded from ownership of the means of living, are forced by economic necessity to sell their labour-power to get a living. Anyone who works for a wage or a salary is a worker. In Britain, as in the rest of the world, this is a majority of the adult population and it includes retired workers, dependents, the unemployed and the self-employed, about 90% of the population.

The capitalist class, who form a minority group, are represented by politicians through the major and minor political parties who compete at elections to form a capitalist government - political parties like the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats, UKIP, The BNP etc. These politicians have a problem. Since the late 19th century, with the extension of the vote to the working class they have had to gain the support of workers at elections and to temporarily satisfy enough of these workers to be re-elected. This is a difficult problem for politicians: how to secure votes from a working class majority to govern in the interests of a minority? Although the machinery of government protects private property ownership a well-tried tactic used by capitalist politicians is to divide and rule.

The skill of politicians is to divide the working class against itself. They are extremely successful partly because workers are already divided in competition for jobs and housing. Trade Unions are also divided by the support they give to their own industry against others as well as the support they give to British capitalism against competitors from abroad. Trade unions even call on governments to protect 'British jobs'; like the recent case of the Bombardier workers in Derbyshire when a contract for trains was awarded to the German manufacturer, Siemens.

Some workers even refuse to accept they are in the working class believing they have superior social status to other workers. These workers refer to themselves as "*middle-class*" because of where they live, where they went to school and what they consume. This political ignorance is exploited by capitalism's politicians and media. THE MAIL ON SUNDAY, for example, crowed at the failure of the recent public sector workers strike writing them off as "*middle-class failures*" and going on to praise "*hard-working families*" in the private sector (3rd July 2010). It is so easy to blame other workers and to decry what they receive in wages in comparison to other workers. Yet, groups of workers who side with the capitalist class and their politicians against other workers often find themselves attacked for being lazy, asking for too high a wage and lack of productivity. The "*middle-class*" is, of course, a myth. So-called "*professional*" workers like university lecturers, teachers, doctors, engineers and architects are forced onto the labour market for exactly the same reason as car-workers, miners and dock workers; they do not own the means of production and distribution. And these often highly paid and university educated workers, when they are not profitable to employ, are quickly made redundant. They are then forced to visit job centres or enrol on re-training courses sitting next to other unemployed workers; carers, nurses and brick-layers. Under capitalism, unemployment is a great leveller.

Politicians constantly undermine the common interest and solidarity necessary for workers to establish Socialism by not only pitting private sector workers against public sector workers over pay, pensions and working conditions but also exploiting workers' worries about employment in areas of high unemployment.

Recently, workers in Manchester were told - by politicians serving the interests of one section of the capitalist class in favour of the construction of a new railway line from London to Manchester - that workers in the North of Britain stood to gain employment if the project was approved by the government. This is a specious argument. There is no guarantee that new jobs will be created when the railway line is completed and it confines the workers' thinking to seeing nothing beyond his or her pay packet thereby retaining the exploitive wages system rather than organising consciously and politically for its abolition.

Workers are also divided over immigration and capitalists re-locating their businesses abroad to employ workers in other countries at cheaper rates of pay. Then there is the division of workers along national lines during war where government propaganda induces one set of non-socialist workers to fight another. In recent years politicians have created a culture of "*blame and shame*" where single parent mothers and white unemployed youth are demonized as "*chavs*", the "*undeserving poor*", the "*under-class*" and "*white trash*", the latter term a particularly nasty racist expression imported from the United States. Capitalist politicians - whose skills at manipulation, dissembling, evasion and subterfuge would shame a snake-oil salesman - are past masters at dividing the working class against

itself to prevent Socialism being considered as a practical solution to the problems facing the workers. Workers need to resist the politics of division and see their interests as identical with other workers no matter where they live.

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Divide and Rule: An Historical Perspective

The division of the working class against itself by politicians has a long history. The new minority Tory government introduced the Reform Act 1867 which almost doubled the electorate, giving the votes to working class males. The 1884 Bill and the 1885 Redistribution Act tripled the electorate again, giving the vote to most agricultural labourers. On paper these Electoral Reform Acts gave a potential Socialist majority the ability to gain control of the machinery of government. Through the revolutionary use of the vote Socialists could send Socialist delegates to Parliament to ensure the smooth and orderly transformation of commodity production and exchange for profit to production for social use.

Despite opposition within the ruling class to extending the franchise, the Tories were confident that the working class was not a revolutionary threat. In 1872 Disraeli gave two speeches on the working class; one at Manchester the other at Crystal Palace. Speaking of the working class in England he said:

[they] are English to the core. They repudiate cosmopolitan principles. They adhere to national principles. They are for maintaining the greatness of the kingdom and the Empire, and they are proud of being subjects of our Sovereign and members of such an Empire (Hugh Cunningham quoted in POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY ed. J. Donald and S. Hall p. 147 1983).

This optimism by Disraeli was borne out by the non-Socialist working class's support for British Imperialism and the Boer War. Thousands of workers also joined the Primrose League, a Tory organisation formed in 1883 and which was barred to atheists and critics of the British Empire. The main function of the Primrose League was to attract the working class away from the Liberal Party who was the dominant opposition party at the time but it also fostered a climate of anti-Socialism. The organisation gave the world the "*working class Tory*" later to be personified in the comic characterization of Johnny Speight's Alf Garnett.

However equally insidious are the workers who give their support to the Labour Party on the fatuous grounds that the Labour Party represents the lesser of two evils. Past Labour governments have also divided the working class, used troops to break strikes supported "*British jobs for British workers*" and pursued racist policies. During two World Wars and other minor conflicts they have urged workers to fight and kill each other. If Alf Garnett had a mirror image of his political stupidity it would be his witless Labour Party supporting son-in-law.

Another problem is the partisan nature of propaganda. The belief that one group of workers is more susceptible to Socialist ideas than another was held by the Social Democratic Federation who pursued the unemployed for support to the exclusion of other workers. Engels criticised the SDF for its political adventurism in courting the unemployed seeing no evidence of increased socialist class consciousness. After one riot he wrote that the crowd consisted of:

masses of poor devils of the East End who vegetate in the borderland between working class and lumpenproletariat, and a sufficient admixture of roughs and 'arrays to leaven the whole into a mass ready for any "lark" up to a wild riot a propos de rien (ENGELS-LAFARGUE CORRESPONDENCE Moscow 1959 vol. 1 p.334).

THE TIMES editorial noted that the crowd after smashing shops and looting made its way back to the East End singing "*Rule Britannia*" (quoted in OUTCAST LONDON G. S. Jones, p.345 1984). The SDF policy was an utter failure. As unemployment became a familiar feature of working class life, other politicians courted the unemployed feeding off their fears and promising them unattainable policies of social reform similar to the SDF's futile policy of "*the right to work*".

A similar policy is pursued today by the Socialist Party and the SWP, two political organisations who disingenuously

divide the working class into a small elite capable of understanding the case for Socialism and a majority who can only reach “*trade union consciousness*” (Lenin: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?, 1903). However, the Socialist case is not aimed at any one particular group of workers. The case for Socialism is aimed at the working class as a whole. Unfettered by prejudice the case for Socialism is within the grasp of any reasonable worker.

Unfortunately, a non-Socialist working class were and still are susceptible to racist ideas and blaming other workers – usually immigrants - for the social problems they face, notably unemployment and lack of adequate housing. Racist policies deliberately used to divide the working class have a long history.

The first response in the East End of London to Jews arriving in Britain to escape pogroms was one of sympathy. This was a time of good economic conditions and little unemployment. However, by the mid-1880's the Great Depression, racist attacks started to take place in the East End of London as bankruptcy increased, among small shop-keepers and unemployment levels rose for the workers. To gain support from the working class, local MP's and journalists took the side of the “*respectable worker*” whose job, it was claimed, were “*threatened*” by immigrant labour, a familiar cry today against workers from Eastern Europe.

Between 1887 and 1888 pressure mounted sufficiently for the government to agree to a Select Committee of Inquiry into the issue of immigration. Local trade unionists shared platforms with Conservative politicians, both decrying the “*Jewish threat*”. In 1892, the Conservative Party, in an attempt to get working class votes, agreed to an Aliens Bill (see B. Schwarz, *Conservatism, Nationalism and Imperialism* in POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY ed. J. Donald and S. Hall 1986).

From the turn of the century anti-immigrant organizations appeared in the East End, most notably the British Brothers' League, which held its first public meeting –packed to capacity- in Stepney in May 1901. The intensity of the movement forced the government to appoint a Royal Commission on the Aliens Bill in 1905, which empowered the Home Secretary to expel any aliens found to be criminal, vagrant, impoverished or who lived “*under insanitary conditions due to overcrowding*” (see Gainer, B. THE ALIEN INVASION: THE ORIGINS OF THE ALIENS ACT OF 1905 a book that does not mention the SPGB and its important principle on the question of race, as do most academic studies of the period).

By 1900, the rate of unemployment, as a percentage of all trade unions making returns, was 2.45%. By 1904 the figure had risen to 6%. (*Board of Trade, Seventeenth abstract of labour statistics*, [Cd 7733, BPP, 61 (1914-16), 322, in K. D. Brown, LABOUR AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 1971). It is within this changed historical context, that the reference to race found its way into the fifth clause of the Party's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of 1904, ironically published in the same year that Sir Francis Galton founded the Eugenics Society.

Eugenics was embraced by the ruling class and it was used by politicians in the Tory and Liberal Party to attack sections of the working class they described as the “*residuum*” or “*undeserving poor*”. Again this is familiar territory. Today, “*hard working families*” are patronisingly praised by capitalist politicians while the “*work-shy*” are demonised as “*chavs*”, the “*underclass*” and council house single mothers with “*feral*” children “*sponging*” off the State. Capitalism is never seen as the cause of social problems only the failing of some groups of workers who need to be disciplined and penalised. On the contempt by the Fabians for sections of the working class we only have to consider the way in which they championed eugenics as a means to stop the poor breeding. Beatrice Webb, after seeing a performance of Shaw's play MAN AND SUPERMAN, was moved to write in her diary:

We cannot touch the subject of human breeding – it's not ripe for the mere industry of induction, and yet I realise that it is the most important of all questions, this breeding of the right sort of man (G. R. Searle: EUGENICS AND POLITICS IN BRITAIN 1900-1914 p. 54 Leydon 1976)

Eugenics, not surprisingly made a strong appeal to other Fabians: Jeffrey Weeks, in his book “SEX, POLITICS AND SOCIETY: THE REGULATION OF SEXUALITY SINCE 1800” (Longmans p. 981) had to say this of the Fabians:

H G Wells had a burst of enthusiasm on hearing Galton and advocated the “sterilisation” of failures. Sidney Webb, more soberly, as was his metier, warned that unless the decline of the birth-rate was averted the nation would fall to the Irish and the Jews. What Eugenists and Fabians shared...and what is characteristic of their appeal, is the belief

in the planning and control of the population.

Professor Weeks goes on to say:

It was inevitable that the Fabians would attend their beliefs in social regulation to fertility: reproduction was obviously too important to be left to individuals and Sidney Webb believed it could not be left to the residuum (the 19th century term for the underclass) to regulate their lives with Malthusian prudence, in 1907 a Fabian tract on The decline of the Birth Rate (...) had warned of the dangers of the differentiated birth rate where the thrift limited their families and the residuum did not (p. 199).

Sydney Webb also argued that the State should adopt social policies which would induce the right sort of people to assume parenthood. We even have G. B. Shaw calling for a State department of evolution to pay the right women for their child rearing services and if necessary to regulate a “*joint-stock human stud farm*”; an example of the enthusiasm held by the Fabians for the policy of eugenics long before Hitler’s rise to power in Germany where it was put into practical effect.

And another political policy they shared with Hitler was racism through the Fabian’s prejudice towards Chinese, Irish and Jewish workers. The Webbs believed that the danger to social progress was “*race deterioration*” posed by the decline in European fertility rates (see *The Webbs and the Non-White world; A case of Socialist(sic) Racism*; J. M. Winter, JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, Vol. 9, No. 1 Jan. 1974, pp. 181-192). In his pamphlet “THE DECLINE OF THE BIRTH RATE” (Fabian Tracts no. 131, 1907 LSE archives) Sidney Webb believed that the country was: “... *gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews*” (p.17) and that the: “*ultimate future of these islands may be to the Chinese!*” (loc cit p17).

The Eugenicist Society would include members such as Lord Beveridge and Lord Keynes. In 1909, Beveridge proposed that men who could not work should be supported by the State: “*but with complete and permanent loss of all citizen rights — including not only the franchise but civil freedom and fatherhood*” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_J._Beveridge). The social policy of eugenics led to the enforced sterilisation of workers in the US and Europe and to the euthanasia programmes and concentration camps of Hitler’s Third Reich.

The fifth clause in the SPGB’s OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES stated:

“That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex”.

Over a century later the working class, regrettably, are still divided by capitalist politicians and therefore remain the last class to achieve its freedom. To become a “*class for itself*” (Marx) requires from all workers, no matter where they live, class solidarity and the rejection of the politics of division pursued by capitalist politicians, journalists and media generally. Socialism is the only alternative.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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